

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF DISTRICT PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS IN SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

This tool is intended to help school districts assess their current practices for accommodating special diets in school meals and identify areas in need of improvement. For more information on the requirements for special dietary accommodations, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Accommodating Special Dietary Needs in School Nutrition Programs](#).

Step 1 — Assessment. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether each recommendation is fully implemented, partially implemented or not implemented by the school district. Refer to the district's policies, guidelines and procedures for special diets and the district's food allergy management plan.

		IMPLEMENTATION			
		Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS					
1.	The district follows all federal and state requirements for accommodating children with special dietary needs, including the Connecticut General Statutes; the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).				
2.	Schools make modifications to school meals only when families provide the appropriate medical statement completed in its entirety.				
3.	For children whose disabilities restrict their diets, schools provide modified meals based on a medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority, i.e., physician, physician assistant, doctor of osteopathy or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). This statement always includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the child's disability and an explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet; the major life activity affected by the disability; and the food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted. 				
4.	For nondisabled children with special dietary needs, schools provide modified meals on a case-by-case basis based on a medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority, i.e., physician, physician assistant, doctor of osteopathy or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). This statement always includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an identification of the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the child's diet; and the food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet and the food or choice of foods that may be substituted. 				
5.	Appropriate medical statements are maintained on file for all students requiring any meal accommodations due to disabilities or other special medical needs. <i>Medical statements for children with and without disabilities are available on the CSDE's Special Diets Web page.</i>				
6.	School food service personnel take the necessary steps to prevent the overt identification of students with special dietary needs.				
7.	The district has a written plan for the management of life-threatening food allergies, as required by Section 10-212c of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.). <i>For more information, see the CSDE's Guidelines for Managing Life-threatening Food Allergies in Connecticut Schools.</i>				
8.	The district takes appropriate precautions to prepare and serve safe meals and snacks for children with food allergies. Procedures are in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a food allergy action plan for each child with life-threatening food allergies; check ingredients labels for all foods served to children with food allergies; designate an area in the kitchen for allergy-free meals and use separate equipment and utensils during preparation, cooking and serving; develop cleaning procedures that avoid cross-contamination; and provide ongoing training for staff members, including management of students with life-threatening food allergies and administration of epipens. 				
TEAM					
9.	The district includes an interdisciplinary team of appropriate personnel in the planning and implementation of special dietary accommodations for school meals, such as school food service personnel, school nurses, Section 504 team members, administrators and other school staff as appropriate.				
10.	The team develops and communicates district protocols to address issues related to accommodating students' special dietary needs.				

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF DISTRICT PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS, continued

	IMPLEMENTATION			
WRITTEN POLICY AND PROCEDURES	Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
11. In addition to the food allergy management plan required by C.G.S. Section 10-212c, the district has a written policy addressing the requirements and procedures for all special dietary accommodations in school nutrition programs. <i>For more information, see the CSDE's Policies on Special Diets Web page.</i>				
12. The district has written standard operating procedures (SOPs) for special dietary accommodations, e.g., procedures for preparing foods for special diets, cleaning procedures for preventing food allergen contamination and training procedures for all staff including substitutes.				
13. The district has written SOPs to ensure that school food service personnel, school health personnel and other appropriate school staff members regularly communicate and collaborate regarding the planning and implementation of special dietary accommodations for children.				
14. The district has written SOPs for obtaining consultation services as needed from a registered dietitian or other recognized medical authority to plan meals for students with special dietary needs.				
COMMUNICATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE)	Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
15. The food service department has SOPs for regularly communicating with all school food service personnel regarding the requirements for special diets, including the district's policies.				
16. The food service department has SOPs for regularly communicating with all school food service personnel regarding the individual needs of each child who has special dietary requirements.				
17. School food service personnel receive professional development on special diets at least once a year.				
18. Professional development for school food service personnel includes training on:				
• USDA requirements for school meal substitutions, including appropriate medical statements;				
• types of special diets and the required modifications for menus and recipes;				
• the use of the district's standard operating procedures for special dietary accommodations; and				
• requirements for food service employees when providing special meals, e.g., allowable procedures, confidentiality requirements.				
COMMUNICATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SCHOOL NURSES)	Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
19. School health services has SOPs for regularly communicating with all school nurses regarding the requirements for special diets, including the district's policies and SOPs.				
20. School health services has SOPs for regularly communicating with all school nurses regarding the individual needs of each child with special dietary needs.				
21. School nurses receive professional development on accommodating special diets at least once a year.				
22. Professional development for school nurses includes training on:				
• federal requirements for school meal substitutions, e.g., USDA, Section 504, IDEA, ADA and FERPA;				
• medical diagnoses and management of special diets; and				
• the use of the district's SOPs for special dietary accommodations.				
COMMUNICATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SCHOOL PERSONNEL)	Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
23. School health services and school food services have a SOP for regularly communicating with each other regarding the individual needs of each child who has special dietary requirements.				
24. The district has a SOP for regularly communicating with other appropriate school personnel as needed (e.g., cafeteria aides, teachers, teachers' aides, administrators and other school staff), regarding the individual needs of each child who has special dietary requirements.				
25. School personnel (such as teachers, teacher's aides and other school staff) receive professional development on special diets to increase awareness of the special dietary needs of the children in their care.				

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF DISTRICT PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS, continued

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION (FAMILIES)	IMPLEMENTATION			
	Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
26. The district has a SOP to ensure communication with families regarding special dietary accommodations for children. This procedure addresses:				
• federal and state requirements for special dietary accommodations;				
• procedures for families to request special dietary accommodations, including completion of the appropriate medical statements;				
• procedures for obtaining nutrition information for school meals; and				
• responsibilities of schools, students and families in managing special diets.				
27. The food service department maintains current nutrition information on file for foods and beverages served in school meals, which is available to students, families, school nurses and others as needed.				
28. Policies and procedures for special dietary accommodations are posted on the district's Web site and shared with families through other means, such as displays, menu backs, newsletters, e-mails, parent and student handbooks, handouts at parent events and public service announcements.				
MONITORING AND REVIEW	Full	Partial	None	Don't Know
29. The district has monitoring procedures to ensure that each school consistently follows the district's policies and standard operating procedures for accommodating special diets.				
30. The district has monitoring procedures to ensure that meal accommodations for special diets are appropriate and meet individual student needs.				
31. The district reviews procedures for special diets at least annually and makes changes as needed.				

Step 2 — Prioritize Areas for Change. Review the areas rated “none” or “partial” and identify the priority areas for change in your school district.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



For more information, visit the CSDE's [Special Diets](#) Web page or contact the [school nutrition programs](#) staff in the CSDE Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457.

This form is available as a PDF document at www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/nutrition/sdn/spdiet_assess.pdf.

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